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A SERMON.

2 COR. iv. 5.

FOR WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES, BUT CHRIST JESUS
THE LORD ; AND OURSELVES YOUR SERVANTS FOR
JESUS' SAKE.

DILIGENCE and fidelity are indispensable requisites, to the proper discharge of the duties of any office whatever. When the trust committed to us is of the most sacred and important nature, our obligation to faithfulness rises to the highest possible degree. As no interest can bear a moment's comparison with that which involves the eternal felicity of man ; so no charge can be considered so highly important as that committed to the ministers of the gospel.

In the preceding chapter, the Apostle enters upon a comparison betwixt the legal and gospel dispensations, with a view no doubt to shew the superior advantages of the latter. He characterizes the legal dispensation, by calling it a ministration of *condemnation* and *death*. This, though glorious in itself, yet, when compared with the gospel, its glory faded away and was wholly lost. He describes the gospel as a dispensation of the *spirit of righteousness* and of *life*. This, like the sun, shines with its own lustre, and eclipses all the glory which was seen in whatever preceded it.

As the gospel is no longer veiled under types and shadows, the ministers under this dispensation use great plainness of speech. They publish, in the most plain, unequivocal manner, the doctrine of sovereign grace and salvation, only by the blood of the Cross.

Every minister, who has been called to this important work, can join with the Apostle and say, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

In order more fully to illucidate the sentiments of the text, we shall attempt,

- I. To shew what is meant by *preaching ourselves*.
- II. What is implied in *preaching Christ Jesus the Lord*. And
- III. In what sense, and to whom, ministers are to be considered as servants.

FIRST. What is meant by preaching ourselves, and when may it be said that men preach themselves? We answer in general, bad men always preach themselves, and good men sometimes do little more.

Men, who were never renewed in the spirit and temper of their minds, and who were never called of God to this work ; who have run without being sent, let their doctrines be orthodox or heterodox, always preach themselves. But this may want both explanation and proof.

It is presumed that we either live for ourselves or for God ; that we either act for our own ease, conveniency, or honour ; or for his glory. Can it be supposed that the man, whose heart was never reconciled to God, can engage in this work with a view to

the divine glory? Surely it cannot. Men, who are not lovers of God in an evangelical sense, are accounted by an inspired Apostle to be lovers of themselves. If we were capable of looking into the hearts of such, we should probably find, that motives of convenience, of ease, or of honour, induced them to enter into this sacred work. With such views, their object would not be to preach Christ but themselves. For,

1st. If a man engage in the ministry from mere lucrative motives, for the sake of a livelihood, he may properly be said to preach himself. The great end which he proposes is a good living: it is therefore to be expected he will preach in a manner best calculated to obtain that object.

It has been said by some, probably of this description, that they considered themselves sacredly bound to please those who employed them. For, say they "If you were to hire a man to labour for you, and to pay him for it, you would expect to have your work done to please you." All such persons must be considered as serving themselves and not our Lord Jesus Christ: *For if we seek to please men (in this sense) we cease to be the servants of Christ.*

2dly, Motives of ease may induce others to engage in the ministry. Like the unjust steward, to *dig they cannot*, (at least they feel an unconquerable aversion to it) *and to beg they are ashamed*. It is true the work appears very different to the faithful minister. To him it is of all others the most active and arduous. It engages all the powers of his mind, and employs all his time and talents. It is not so with the man who makes his ease his main object. The former will lay himself out to his utmost to advance the cause of Christ; the latter will be very sparing of his pains. He will content himself with knowing very little of the state of his flock. If he can preach steadily and in season, he will excuse himself from preach-

ing occasionally, or *out of usual season*. Such Shepherds resemble those described by Ezekiel, who feed not the flock, but feed themselves of the flock.*

How little do such preachers imitate the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He laboured night and day, and with the most fervid zeal and humility, served God in the gospel of his Son. In his affectionate address to the elders of Ephesus, he could appeal to their consciences, that he had taught them publicly and from house to house; and that by the space of three years (probably the whole time he was with them) he had without ceasing *warned every one night and day with tears*. This was acting in character as a minister of Christ; this was consistent with the dignity of an Apostle. Motives of ease had no influence with him. He approved himself to God, not by excusing himself from duty, or shunning occasions of preaching; but by his *incessant labours, watchings, and fastings*.

A faithful minister, who regards the souls of his hearers, will always find much to do besides preaching at stated seasons, and he will be willing to spend and be spent for their good. We observe,

3dly, Motives of honour and worldly respectability, may be an inducement to some to enter into this sacred office.

To be greeted in the market places, and to be called of men *Rabbi*, would be highly flattering to their pride. To persons of this description, the applause of their fellow men must be the great object of their desires. They are described by our Lord, as loving the praise of men, more than the praise of God. This class of preachers study more to please than to edify; more to gratify the fancies of their hearers, than to inform the judgment or affect the heart. The beauties of composition (if they are capable of them) will be prominent features in all their dis-

* Ezek. xxxiv.

courses ; but you may look in vain for a shred of evangelic truth.

Those doctrines, which are humbling to human pride, and which lead the penitent to Calvary and the bleeding Cross, will be generally avoided with great caution. But should a man even preach the pure apostolic doctrines, if it were only with a view to make himself popular, he might be said to *preach himself, and not Christ Jesus the Lord.*

4thly, When they teach for doctrines the commandments of men.

By the commandments of men we are to understand all such doctrines as are not fairly deduced from the sacred Scriptures. Such as have no other foundation than established custom, and the traditions of men, to support them. These may be taught with apparent seriousness, and be well wrought with the excellency of speech, and with enticing words of man's wisdom ; yet after all, as such preaching is never attended with the demonstrative influences of the Spirit, and with power, it will only prove that such persons preach themselves, and not the LORD JESUS CHRIST. I add once more,

5thly, Good men, and such as have been called of God to preach, sometimes do little more than preach themselves. This is the case whenever they engage without a due sense of their dependence on Christ for strength. And this will probably account for so many of their discourses appearing so cold and lifeless.

Pious ministers, who from the purest motives have entered into the work, yet for want of duly realizing that Christ has said, *without me ye can do nothing*, have often been obliged to draw the painful conclusion, that their preaching had exhibited themselves rather than their Divine Master.

It is possible that upon particular occasions unworthy motives may insensibly influence them ; but after all, they are never satisfied with this kind of

preaching. They consider it only as beating the air, unless they have some feeling sense of the love of God in their own souls. Every sermon which we preach, without having our views directed to the glory of God and the best good of our fellow-men, will fall in some sense under this description. Oh, it is to be lamented, that we should ever spend our time so miserably as to preach ourselves.

We will now quit these barren regions, and inquire,

SECONDLY, What is implied in preaching Christ Jesus the Lord?

This includes a general description of his character, offices, and work, as Mediator.

And first, in order to preach Christ in the sense of the text, we must understand his true character. Should it be asked, *Who is this King of glory?* If to answer this question we should exhibit a character different from that given in the sacred Scriptures, we should dishonour him, and deceive our fellow-men.

It is evident that the great body of the Jewish nation mistook his true character; and notwithstanding he was so particularly pointed out in their Scriptures, they did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

The enemies of our Lord were watching upon all occasions, to see if they could not get sufficient evidence against him to prove him an impostor. They frequently assumed the garb of friendship, and with insidious acknowledgements attempted to deceive him; he as often detected their base hypocrisy, and exposed their unblushing ignorance. Upon a certain day the *Herodians*, *Sadducees*, and *Pharisees*, united in council, and formed a train of questions, by which they supposed they might entangle him in his talk; but to their surprise, they found that their deep laid sophistry, in this instance as on all former occasions, procured them only shame and defeat. Base as their

design was, Jesus condescended to answer each of them openly and frankly, without the least art or collusion. Finding his enemies all silenced, he asked them the following questions: "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David." This led to another very important question, which went directly to a developement of his true character. "How then (said Jesus) doth David in spirit call him Lord; saying, the LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? If then David call him Lord, how is he his son? and no man was able to answer him a word."

Our Lord's questions were not like those proposed by his enemies, designed only to entangle, but to lead them to a discovery of his true and proper Deity. Without a belief in his supreme Deity, it is conceived we never can tell how he can be David's son and David's Lord. It will be equally difficult to understand his own declaration upon another occasion: "I am, said he, the *root* and *offspring* of David, the bright and the morning star." But how could this be true if he were not a divine person? In what proper sense could he be the root of David? We can easily conceive of him as David's offspring.

When Jesus declared himself to be the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one, it is evident that the Jews understood him to assert more than that he was merely a saint, or an adopted son. They certainly understood, by the general tenure of his conversation, that he meant to make them believe that he was a divine person. Hence they charged him with blasphemy. For, said they, *Thou being a man makest thyself God*. Was it not totally inconsistent with the character which Jesus sustained, to lead his hearers into this deception, without suggesting any thing to convince them of their mistake?

This sentiment receives further strength by the following account. A poor infirm man, who had been confined near forty years, was healed by our Lord upon the Sabbath. And in order to give the most unequivocal proof that it was a real and not a pretended miracle, he said to the man who was healed, *Arise, take up thy bed and walk.* For this, the Jews accused him of violating the law of Moses. Remark, my hearers, how he vindicated himself: MY FATHER WORKETH HITHERTO, AND I WORK. That is, I work in the same omnipotent, independent manner as he does. *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father,* MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD. It is evident in what follows, that Christ did not deny the conclusion which had been drawn from what he had said, that he *made himself equal with God*; but further declared, that it was the supreme will of him that sent him, that *all men should honour the SON even as they honour the FATHER.* It is impossible to do this, without giving divine honours to him.

Ecclesiastical history furnishes a very singular story on this subject, which being in point, I will take the liberty to relate it. In the fourth century, during the reign of Theodosius, the bishops on a certain day went to court to pay their respects to his imperial Majesty. The Emperor was seated on a throne of state, and his son Arcadius by him. Among the crowd there was a venerable old bishop, named Amphilochius. He knew that the Emperor had been suspected of favouring the Arians, and of entertaining unworthy notions of Jesus Christ. He determined, it seems, to address one argument to his feelings. Hence he very respectfully saluted him, but took no notice of his son. Theodosius was offended, and ordered him to be excluded from the company. "What!" exclaimed the old man, "are you affront-

ed, Cesar, because I did not honour the Son as I honoured the Father? Assure yourself Almighty God abhors such blasphemers as do not honour his only begotten Son as they honour him.* It appears by the sequel to have carried the desired conviction to the mind of the Emperor. God grant it may produce the same effect upon all who entertain dishonourable thoughts of the glorious Saviour.

Should the question now be proposed by our Divine Master, which he once put to the disciples, the answer would give a specimen of modern sentiments upon this important subject. "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" We might answer, Some say thou art no more than a man, and had no existence until thou wast born of Mary; yet being supernaturally endued with a spirit of inspiration, thou becamest an eminent Teacher of mankind; and in as much as thou didst seal thy doctrine with thy blood, thy name has been honourably enrolled with the noble company of martyrs. Others say thou art more than mere man, and acknowledge thee to be a *super-angelic being*; that is, existing before angels, and exalted above them; the first and noblest of all created beings: yet as thou art only a creature, thou art infinitely removed from any participation in the Godhead. There are others also who say, that by office thou art to be called God, but in a secondary or lower sense than we use the word when we apply it to the supreme Jehovah. Should our Lord return the question to us, my brethren, "But whom say ye that I am?" Should we not answer with Peter, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!" Can we hesitate to declare our belief, that he whom angels were commanded to worship is the *true God and eternal life*?†

We are expressly taught, that the Word that was in the beginning, that was with God, and that was

* Eccl. Researches, p. 146.

† Vid. Heb. i. 6. and Rev. iv. 1 John v. 20.

God, was made flesh and dwelt among men; and his glory was beheld, as of the only begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth. Here was exhibited to full view that wonderful character foretold in prophecy, whose name was to be called *Emanuel*, "God with us." Here also we behold a person fitly qualified for the office of Mediator. God manifest in the flesh. Divinity united with humanity. The Son of God taking on him the spiritual seed of Abraham. Here we behold the *Day's-man* spoken of by Job. One who had power to lay his hand on both. In his mediation we behold the anti-type of Aaron, who stood with his censor betwixt the living and the dead, and made an atonement for sinners, and staid the destroying plague. But,

2dly, In preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, we are not only to describe his character, but to bring into view what he has done and suffered.

He came upon the arduous work of redemption. In order to accomplish this, the divine law must be magnified and made honourable. Its preceptive part must be fulfilled to a tittle, and its penalty must be honourably satisfied.

The obedience of Christ perfectly corresponded with the nature and requirements of this law. The law demanded supreme love to God. Christ could say, with the greatest sincerity, *I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is in my heart.* Our Lord expressed the ardour of his affection to his Father's character, when he said, *I have meat to eat which the world knows not of. This is my meat and drink, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* So confident was Christ of having perfectly obeyed his Father's will, that in the closing scene of life he solemnly appealed to him in the following language: "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work

* I cannot suppose with Athanasius and his followers, that the word *begotten* in this text refers to the Divine Nature of Christ, but to his human, which was produced in a way which no other person ever was.

which thou gavest me to do ; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

While our Lord tabernacled in clay he exhibited the most amiable example of sincere, undeviating piety towards God, and of universal benevolence and good will towards men. His enemies often attempted to blacken his character, by charging him with crimes which they knew he was never guilty of ; but they were never able to convince him of sin.* The Roman governor, who condemned him to die, freely confessed that he found no fault in him. In his whole life he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He constantly exemplified every virtue, which can dignify and adorn human nature.

But neither his holy, unblameable life, nor his perfect obedience to the precepts of the divine law, nor both taken together, could make an atonement for sin. It pleased the LORD to *bruise* him, to put him to *grief* ; yea, to *make his soul an offering for sin*.

It was one great design of his being *made under the law*, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. We, my brethren, were not only under the law as a perfect rule of righteousness, binding us to perpetual obedience, but under its penalty as guilty transgressors. Here sin had placed us ; and here Christ found us. By our transgressions we had rendered ourselves obnoxious to the curses of the divine law. Christ gave himself up to the death of the cross, and suffered on the ignominious tree, to redeem us from this state of condemnation.

The honour, the equity, and the benevolence of the divine law, were illustriously displayed and vindicated in the death of Christ. Here sin was made to appear exceeding sinful, and exposed in all its in-

* John viii. 46.

finite ugliness and deformity. His sufferings, though limited in duration, were infinite in value, in consequence of the dignity of the sufferer.

The tragic scene of Calvary presented to the gazing multitude only a spectacle of wretchedness and wo. They saw nothing but Jesus suffering as a malefactor, or at most as a victim of the threatened curse; but God had ordained that from this fatal tree should be extracted the balsam of life; the only balm which can heal the sin-burthened soul, and restore peace to the labouring conscience.

Here Jesus finished transgression, and made an end of sins for every believer. Here he made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness for all who obey him.* Here he tasted the vinegar and the gall, and cried, *It is finished*, and gave up the ghost!

A very considerable part of apostolic preaching consisted in exhibiting Christ crucified. And Paul hence inferred that the Galatians, who had heard the gospel, had had Jesus Christ evidently set forth, crucified before their eyes. "We preach, (said he to the Corinthians) Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

Jesus was not only crucified and slain, but taken from the cross and laid in the silent tomb! Here we behold the *Prince of life* sleeping in death! While the Saviour lay entombed, no voice of joy or gladness was heard through the wide range of creation.

"Seraph and saint, with drooping wings,
Cease their harmonious breath;
No blooming trees, nor bubbling springs,
While Jesus sleeps in death."

But on the morning of the third, the appointed day, being the *first* day of the week (a day ever dear to Christians) our blessed Redeemer arose, and tri-

* Dan. ix. 24.

umphed over death and the grave. Ye angels, who rolled away the stone, with what wondrous solicitude ye watched the heavenly form, and marked the first symptoms of returning life! What raptures swelled your immortal breasts, whilst reascending the realms of endless day, you shouted a risen Saviour!

After giving the most incontestable evidence of his resurrection to his desponding disciples, by showing them his hands and feet, he enlarged their commission, and sent them to preach the gospel to every creature.

The manner in which he closed his last interview with his disciples was very interesting and affecting. It is said, "he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and while he was blessing them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight." What mingled emotions of joy and grief must have run through their souls, while gazing after him, as he ascended his native heavens!

Having thus honourably finished his state of sufferings, he took possession of his throne, and was proclaimed both Lord and Christ. We therefore not only preach Christ crucified, but Christ risen and reigning.

3dly. Preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, includes not only his divinity and atonement, but all the other doctrines of the gospel: Such as *divine sovereignty* in the application of the atonement, according to God's eternal purpose; *pardon and forgiveness* through the precious blood of Christ; *justification* by his finished righteousness without the aid of human merit; *adoption* according to the riches of his grace, by which we are brought into the family of Christ, and made partakers of all the privileges of the sons of God; *sanctification*, by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts, and by operating in all the means appointed to make us holy, and to prepare

us for the everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. These doctrines may be preached, and in some sense believed, without the real existence of the true grace of the gospel. Hence,

4thly. In preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, it is highly important, to urge with great plainness those duties which have a more practical influence upon mankind. These are repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and also, that those who have believed through grace be careful to maintain good works.

It may be necessary to inquire, whether repentance and faith are duties to be urged upon mankind in general, or whether they are limited to any particular characters. The duty of repentance is so far limited, that it respects sinners, and only such. It is not conceived, that a perfectly innocent, holy, unoffending being, can be the subject of repentance. "I came not, said Jesus, to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

If we take the Holy Scriptures for our directory in this matter, we shall find that Christ and his apostles inculcated these duties upon all who heard them, without exception. When our Lord began his public ministry, immediately after his fasting and temptations in the wilderness, he *began to preach and to say* REPENT, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* His hearers upon a certain occasion, with a view to evade the truth, suggested that he had mistaken the character of his audience, and told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; intimating, that these would have been proper subjects of his doctrine. Our Lord repelled the insinuation with much spirit. "Suppose ye that these men were sinners above all men in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; *but except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" The apostles were charged to preach the same doc-

trine. Beginning at Jerusalem, they were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations.

But did not the apostles consider all the human race as dead in trespasses and sins? They certainly did. And did they notwithstanding call upon them to repent? This is equally true. But it may be asked, how this can be reconciled? The answer is easy. Unless we suppose that our opposition to the divine government releases us from our allegiance to God, we shall certainly conclude, that our having long been in a state of rebellion against him, is a reason why we ought to repent and turn to him with our whole heart. But whether we see the propriety of such a mode of preaching or not, the facts remain incontestable.

As a specimen of what has now been asserted, take the following. An astonishing miracle, wrought upon a lame man at the gate of the Temple, drew a large concourse of people together. Peter saw them stand gazing, and thought it a fit opportunity to give them an exhortation. He first charged them with having been accessory to the death of Christ. "Ye denied," said he, "the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life."——But notwithstanding their aggravated guilt, and almost invincible unbelief, he exhorted them to repentance. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Peter undoubtedly thought it the duty of these persons to repent, or he would not have exhorted them to it. St. Paul was evidently of the same mind respecting the duty of sinners; for when preaching to the Athenians, at Mars-Hill, he asserted, that "God now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Should it be granted that God calls on men to repent, it may be further asked, whether he requires them to believe? Sacred truth will furnish the answer. "After that John was put into prison, Jesus

came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *Repent ye and believe the gospel.*"* The persons addressed were not at this time disciples, for Christ had called none as yet.

When Jesus crossed the sea of Tiberias and came to Capernium, the people who had been miraculously fed on the other side took shipping and followed him. Our Lord knew their motives were wholly selfish; he therefore exhorted them *not to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.* Upon this they ask, *What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* Jesus answered, *this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

The meaning of the above question was obviously this: If we are not to make it our principal concern to labour for the meat which perisheth, what is the work which God requireth of us, or what shall we do that will be acceptable to him? To this, they were told that they must cordially embrace the gospel, and believe in its divine Author. I will add but one passage more in confirmation of this point.

Paul, in his affectionate address to the Elders of Ephesus, appeals to them with a confidence worthy of a minister of Jesus Christ. "Ye know, said he, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind; and how I kept back nothing that might be profitable unto you; but have shewed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house." What a blessed example, my brethren, for us to copy after! What meekness! What self-dedication! What unwearied zeal in his Master's cause! "I have taught you publicly and from house to house; testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Here we have a

* Mark i. 14, 15.

clear specimen of apostolic preaching. Nor can there, I conceive, be any other candid meaning put upon these words, than that Paul urged it constantly as a duty, both upon Jews and Greeks, to repent and believe the gospel.

Objections drawn from the moral impotency and inability of sinners are of no avail: for the same might be urged as an excuse for not loving God. It is no more of a spiritual exercise to *repent* and *believe*, in the most evangelical sense, than it is to love God according to the spirit of the divine law. Nor is there any more impropriety in urging the former, than the latter.

Those who have believed through grace, are also to be exhorted to maintain good works. To add to their faith virtue. Good works are the fruits and effects of faith, and flow from it as a stream does from its fountain. That faith which does not produce a holy life, cannot be the true faith of the gospel: for he that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure.

I add once more, 5thly. In preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, the faithful minister will hold up to believers the precious promises and consolations of the gospel.

In applying the promises, he will always distinguish betwixt the clean and the unclean; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. He will not give that which is holy to those whose hearts are under the reigning influence of sin. The promises are all in Christ, and belong exclusively to believers. The precious word of God is admirably adapted to support them in all circumstances and conditions in life. It contains doctrine, instruction, and reproof. It furnishes sincere milk for babes, and strong meat for such as are able to bear it. This sacred repository is richly stored with the best comfort for mourners; and the most reviving cordials for the fainting, drooping believer. From this the steward of Christ brings out things both new and

old, and displays in infinite variety the riches of grace. In a word, to preach according to the spirit of our text, is to exalt the glorious character of Christ, and as far as our feeble powers extend, to exhibit him in all his infinite excellency. I hasten

THIRDLY, To the last thing in the method, which was to shew in what sense, and to whom, ministers are servants. *Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

Ministers are peculiarly devoted to the interests of the Church of God. Like the Apostle, they ardently desire to present every man perfect in Christ.

When they enter into the pastoral relation, they take the oversight of a particular flock; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind. They here solemnly pledge themselves to watch over them in the Lord, as those that must render an account at the great day. Ministers therefore serve the Church for Christ's sake. For the love they bear to him, they are ready at all times to serve the lowest and smallest that belong to him.

They endeavour, as far as truth and duty permit, to accommodate themselves to the circumstances and conditions of their people. They overlook none, they despise none that belong to Christ, but endeavour that all classes should share in their labours of love. Though the wealthy and respectable may claim some particular attention, yet they cheerfully *condescend to men of low degree.*

As servants of the Church, they are ready at all times to impart their counsels and instructions to those who ask them. In all seasons of trouble and distress, whether of body or mind, they tenderly sympathize with their afflicted people. In a word, in prosperity and adversity, by day and by night, in health and in sickness, in life and in death, they are devoted to the best interests of the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers.

Though we are commanded not to be the servants of men; that is, to consider them as our masters in

such a sense as to shrink from our duty, and displease God in order to please them; yet, for Christ's sake, a minister ought to be willing to do all in his power to serve his dear fellow-men, in any way that may tend to promote their eternal salvation. If success attends his faithful labours, and he is so happy as to see his people awakened to a sense of their danger, and concerned to know how they shall escape the wrath divine, how readily will he impart instruction to them. He will rejoice to go from house to house, and converse and pray with those who feel sensible of their undone condition. The hours spent in this way, he will esteem among the happiest moments of his life. He will be always easy of access, and by his tender, affectionate counsels and prayers, he will convince his hearers, that it is them and not theirs that he seeks.

Every Christian minister, from a deep and affecting sense of God's goodness in pardoning, sanctifying, and calling him to this honourable work, will say with the apostle, *I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise.* I am under obligation to them all for Christ's sake, and whenever I have opportunity, I am bound to try to do them good.

I add once more, scenes of distress, such as sickness and death, often call us to the abodes of poverty and wretchedness; and sometimes to places, where vice riots in unhallowed pleasures. Places, which we should shun with abhorrence, were we not compelled to them by a sense of duty. But in hopes of being made instrumental of saving a soul from everlasting misery, we are willing for Christ's sake to serve the very vilest and most wretched of our guilty race.

Having thus attempted to explain the different parts of our subject, it only remains to make some application of it to the present occasion. As the sentiments, which have been exhibited from the text, have brought into view some of the duties of the Christian ministry, they naturally direct our

thoughts and our address, in the first place, to the Candidate for the pastoral office.

MY REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER,

WE are fully persuaded that it is your fixed determination, in all your public preaching, to exhibit Christ Jesus the Lord. We rejoice that a door in Divine Providence is opened for you to preach to a people, whose views and sentiments are congenial with your own, and whose souls are thirsting for the waters of life. Nothing else can satisfy them. Determine therefore, my Brother, to know nothing, comparatively, among them, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let him be "your theme to preach, your song to sing." You can never exhaust your subject. If you enter properly into it, it will warm your own heart, and will probably reach the hearts of others. You know, my Brother, the pleasure of preaching a felt Christ.

You will endeavour to lead your hearers to just views of the character, offices, and work of Christ as mediator. Assure them that there is salvation in no other. Endeavour to convince them of the danger of neglecting this salvation. Hold up to them the aggravated condemnation which awaits the impenitent unbeliever.

From this day forward you will consider yourself as solemnly engaged for Christ's sake to serve this dear people in the gospel. Your love to your Master will be demonstrated by your faithfulness in feeding his sheep, and in feeding his lambs. The weak, the tempted, the trembling believer, will claim a large share of your tenderest concern. It will afford them unspeakable relief to find, that, like the High-Priest, you "can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way."

I need not remind you, my Brother, of the importance of living, as well as preaching, Christ. You will feel the necessity of daily taking heed to your-

self, as well as to your doctrine. Your usefulness, in a great degree, will depend on the circumspection of your life. The people, to whom you are to minister in holy things, expect you will be "an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, and in purity." Much, indeed, is expected of you, and much you will be able to do through the strength of Christ. Under the darkest scenes of trial and discouragement, you will find support from that precious promise, "Lo I am with you." May the great Head of the church long continue you a blessing to this dear people, and make you the happy, honoured instrument of turning many to righteousness, which shall be for your present encouragement and future joy. And when you shall have faithfully discharged the duties assigned you, and finished your course of sufferings according to the will of God, may you wait in joyful expectation the coming of the Chief Shepherd, who shall place a crown of glory on your head, that shall never fade away. May God grant it for Christ's sake.

This Church and Congregation will receive our congratulations on the present occasion.

DEAR BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

WE rejoice with you, that God is this day giving you one of Zion's sons to take you by the hand, and lead you in the way of truth and holiness. "Receive him, therefore, in the Lord, and hold him in reputation."

Though from his knowledge and experience, we think him a scribe well instructed into the kingdom, yet you are in danger of expecting too much from him. He is a man of like passions with others, and without divine assistance he can do nothing to purpose. Should he only preach himself, he will do you no good. If you wish him to come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel, and to preach "Christ Jesus the Lord," you must pray for him. Do all in your power to encourage his heart

and strengthen his hands. Endeavour to render his outward circumstances so far comfortable, as to free his mind from any embarrassment about the things of the world. Be tender of his person and character; remembering you are not to "*Rebuke an Elder, but to entreat him as a father.*" And O that God would continue him a long and rich blessing to you and to your children; that under his faithful administrations, you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is our hearts' desire and prayer, that your love to God and to one another may daily increase, until you shall quit these mortal shores and meet in those pure undisturbed regions of perfect bliss, where God shall be all in all.

In concluding our subject, this numerous and respectable assembly will suffer me to address them in a few words.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

ARE ministers willing for Jesus' sake to be servants to you? Do they preach Christ to you? Do you realize that these are the servants of the most high God, who show to you the way of salvation? Do they come to you in the name of the Lord? O! how solemn then will your account be at the last day! God forbid, that any of you should be found contemners of his gospel, lest his wrath break out like fire upon you, and there be none to quench it.

In this day of unusual visitation, when Jesus is riding in triumph through our land, may Heaven grant, that you may individually experience the renovating influences of the Spirit of God, forming you into a meetness for that holy happy state, where we hope through the riches of grace finally to meet with all the ransomed millions, never, never more to part! Will God grant it, for the Redeemer's sake.

AMEN.

THE CHARGE.

By the Rev. Dr. STILLMAN.

THE power of ordination is, by Jesus Christ, committed to his church. The essence of it consists in the call of the church and the acceptance of the candidate. But I do not recollect an instance of ordination recorded in the New Testament, without the presence and assistance of one or more of the apostles or elders.

On the present occasion we have not met to *ordain* this our Brother, but to introduce him, as *already ordained*, to the pastoral care of this particular church and society, agreeably to their unanimous call. This might have been done in a private way, but the present mode, in my judgment, is more eligible, because there is an obvious religious fitness in it. The character of a minister of the gospel is sacred and important. Instalment is a solemn covenant entered into between him and the church, no matter how public it is. Let God, angels and men witness the interesting transaction! and may the repeated recollection of it, happily prevent pastor and church from acting incompatible with their obligations to God and to each other.

You are sensible, my hearers, that there is great solemnity attached to ordinations and instalments, when properly conducted; and often great good results from them.

The various religious services, performed on these occasions, are solemn and appropriate, and are calculated deeply to impress the minds of the people with a sense of the great importance of the gospel and its ministry: such as repeated addresses to *Almighty God*, praise and thanksgiving for a constant succession of faithful men to preach the gospel, a sermon adapted to the occasion, a charge to the pastor elect, reminding him of his several duties; and the right hand of fellowship, by which the ministers and churches in the vicinity, receive him as a brother and fellow labourer in the gospel vineyard. By this union they strengthen the hands of each other, and publicly engage to do every thing in their power, to promote the cause of real religion. The whole is serious and impressive.

The part assigned me by the council now convened, is, to *Charge* you, my Rev'd Brother, to fulfil the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus, with fidelity and perseverance.

I address you, not with the authority of an apostle, but with the affection and equality of a brother in the ministry. Pay! I beseech you, a strict attention to your own heart. *Take heed*

thyself, said Paul to Timothy. If you wish to enjoy the pleasures of religion, to study, preach and live as becomes the gospel, cultivate a lively sense of divine things on your own mind. This being the case, your work will be your delight; and your preaching will come warm from the heart. Without it, you will drag on heavily.

Guard against every wrong temper. You best know where lies your greatest danger; and what the sin is that most easily besets you. Against that place a double guard. *Watch and pray*, said Christ, *that you enter not into temptation*. Your conduct will be critically observed; and your faults, though comparatively small, will be magnified by men unfriendly to the gospel or to you. Cultivate the christian tempers, such as, meekness, humility, brotherly kindness, charity; and let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, be also in you. Be affable and condescending. Let the poor find you easy of access, and anxious sinners always ready to receive, and converse with them about their best interest. In your commerce with mankind, you will maintain the seriousness of your ministerial character, remembering at the same time, that true religion is in no respect inconsistent with polished manners.

Guard against a narrow and contracted temper toward other Christians. Be faithful to your own sentiments, and candid toward them who differ from you. The difference is mutual, and to be expected in the present state of ignorance and prejudice. We are *men*, and as such liable to mistake. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, is an apostolic direction. The judgment may be *convinced*, but cannot be *forced*: we should therefore *reason* with, not *rail* at our erring brethren. By the former we may convince them, by the latter excite wrong tempers, and prejudice their minds against the truth.

Take heed unto the doctrine. Make the sacred oracles the man of your counsel. All you deliver to the people must be supported with, *Thus saith the Lord*. Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. Insist much, dear Sir, on the being and perfections of JEHOVAH; the deity of JESUS CHRIST; his whole mediatorial character and work; the total depravity of man; the nature and necessity of regeneration; the deity, personality and influence of the HOLY GHOST; the doctrine of atonement; the sovereignty of God, and the riches of his grace in the salvation of sinners, and the necessity of practical religion.

Remember, Sir, you are to watch for souls as one who must give an account. God forbid that you, or any of us, your brethren in the ministry, should be found unfaithful!

Be much in your study. *Give thyself wholly to these things, that thy profiting may appear to all*.

Administer the special ordinances of the gospel to believers, the only qualified subjects, and according to the *mode* adopted

by Christ and his apostles. Be attentive to the qualifications and characters of those whom you receive into the church. Admit none who do not give a good degree of evidence, that they have passed from death to life. Pay a strict attention to the discipline of the church : let nothing be done through partiality.

Lay hands suddenly on no man. Ever follow Paul's direction to Timothy : *Commit these things to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* They must be faithful, or godly men, and able to teach others.

We pray that the great Head of the church may enable you to be faithful unto death, and finally give you a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

To you, our Christian Friends, who have invited this our Brother to take the pastoral care of you, we beg leave to say—The obligations between him and you are reciprocal. You will pray for him ; encourage his heart and strengthen his hands. Detach him as much as possible from the cares and anxieties of the world, by making a suitable provision for his support. The labourer is worthy of his hire.

We congratulate you on your united and happy settlement of a Pastor this day, and pray God that he may be a burning and a shining light, and that you and this whole society may long rejoice in his light.

The Right-Hand of Fellowship.

By the Rev. JOSEPH GRAFTON.

IT was a very important interrogation of the prophet, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Union and affection are necessary in all societies, to ensure happiness and success. No system ever promulgated among mankind, is so much calculated to produce unity of heart, sincere and fraternal affection, as the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, without these, every theory of religion will be as cold and unmeaning as apathy itself. "By this (said our divine Master) shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Real Christians are affectionately united in sentiment, in judgment, and in practice. They love each other

"in the truth, and for the truth's sake;" not that they all agree in the externals of religion, (happy would it be were this the case) but, in the essentials of it, they are united.

Various are the tokens, by which union and friendship are exhibited; that of giving the hand is the most common, and it appears from the sacred Scriptures, not only to have been practised as a friendly, but as a religious rite. When Jehu met Jehonadab, he saluted thus, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And he answered, It is. If it be, then give me thy hand; and he gave him his hand." "When James, Cephas, and John, who were esteemed pillars, in the apostolic church, perceived the grace given unto Barnabas and Paul, they gave unto them the right hand of fellowship."

This part of the service, by the Council convened on this occasion, being assigned me, I do, my dear Brother, at their request and in their behalf, most affectionately give you this hand, as a token of our religious union and friendship. We wish you, dear Sir, every spiritual blessing, and that you may be abundantly successful in the work of the Lord. May the union formed between you, and this church, be *mutual, beneficial and lasting*. We engage you our prayers, our advice, and as occasion may require, our assistance, expecting the same from you, as a reasonable return of our reciprocal affection. O! that the great Head of the church would endue you with every ministerial qualification, and make you the happy and honoured instrument of turning many to righteousness, that at last you may shine as a star in the firmament. And, at the great and solemn day of retribution, when you shall be called to give account of your stewardship, you may then exultingly say, in the all powerful and all glorious grace of our divine Lord, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me." Finally, through the riches of divine grace, may you be so happy, as to receive from your God and Judge, that animating plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

AMEN.

